

## EXCEPTION REQUEST – PARK PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL MODERNIZATION CRITICAL AREAS ORDINANCE WETLAND BUFFER REDUCTION

Monroe School District is requesting an Exception to the Critical Areas Ordinance MCC 20.05.080 (D)(1) that requires a minimum 200-foot undisturbed wetland buffer for Category 1 wetlands. The District is requesting the Exception per MCC 20.05.050 (C)(1) which allows for exceptions to the Critical Areas Ordinance by public agencies or utilities. This exception is in association with the Park Place Middle School (PPM) Modernization project.

The PPM project proposes to improve the existing athletic fields with artificial turf, a synthetic track, and lighting. The upgraded fields will be in the same location as the existing fields and will not extend any clearing or grading beyond currently developed areas. At issue is the fact that the current fields are already well within the 200' buffer of an off-site Category 1 Wetland to the south. This portion of the property has been used as athletic fields since the facility was opened as Monroe High School in 1974. The field has been used for both school and community sports, as well as physical education classes. Configuration of the field has remain essentially unchanged since its original construction. The proposed upgraded field locations will overlay the existing fields and will not expand the area of clearing, nor will they impact any existing vegetation on the south edge of the property.

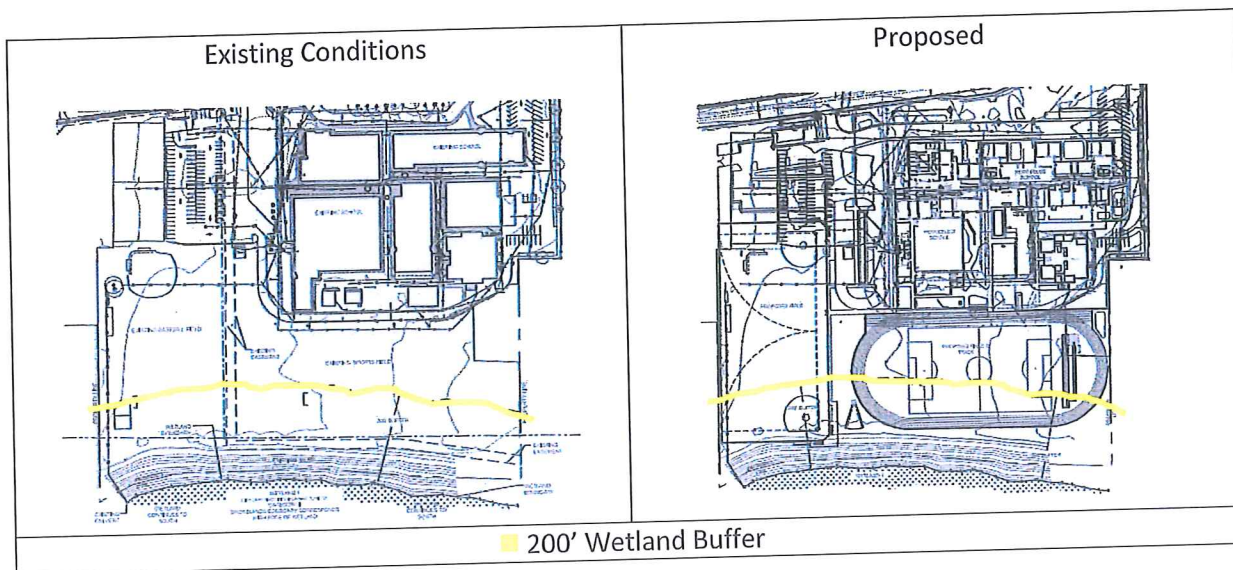
Before the high school was opened in the 70's, the property was operated as Park Place Nursery. Historical photos show that the field area was already cleared for the nursery's use.

*1969 Aerial Photo showing cleared area for Park Place Nursery*



The entire school parcel is 19.4 acres, which is a small site for serving 850 middle school students. The new school design will optimize the use of the developed north portion of the site with new/remodeled buildings, site circulation, landscaping and approved parking. The only area remaining for athletic field use is the south portion of the property, which includes the 200-foot wetland buffer. There is no other on-site option for moving the fields.

Roughly half of the existing football/soccer fields lie within the wetland buffer. The same condition will occur with the proposed field upgrades – approximately half of the football/soccer field and track will lie within the wetland buffer as well as roughly half of the southern baseball field.



If the District were to re-design the site with no intrusion into the 200-foot wetland buffer, there would be room for only one baseball field with some extra area remaining that would not be large enough for any kind of athletic field. This would not be adequate to serve the physical education needs of the middle school. Additionally, this would impact the community by removing fields that are currently used for after-school and recreational sports.

To mitigate the buffer impacts, the District is proposing to purchase off-site mitigation credits from the Skykomish Mitigation Bank. Refer to the Critical Areas Study for more detailed information.

$$97,700 \text{ sf impacted buffer} \times 0.2 \text{ replacement ratio} = 19,540 \text{ sf mitigation credits required}$$

$$19,540 \text{ sf mitigation credits} \times \$4.47 \text{ per credit} = \$87,344$$

Health and Fitness is one of the state-mandated Essential Academic Learning Requirements for all students and a Physical Education program is required per RCW 28A.230.040. In order to deliver an effective Physical Education program, it is essential that schools have adequate outdoor athletic fields. Due to the size of the property, there is no other alternative location or configuration for the fields that would avoid the wetland buffer.

The District meets the Exception criteria because:

- The District is a Public Agency;
- The fields are essential to the school's ability to meet state-mandated educational requirements;
- The size of the property prohibits relocating the fields;
- There is no other feasible alternative that would locate the fields outside of the wetland buffer; and
- The proposed purchase of off-site mitigation credits will mitigate impacts to the on-site buffer.



### Critical Areas Exception

Exceptions. The proponent of the activity shall submit a written request for exception from the director that describes the proposed activity and exception that applies. Depending on the exemption requested, the director (for administrative decisions) or hearing examiner (for reasonable use exceptions) shall review the exception requested to verify that it complies with this chapter and approve or deny the exception. All decisions made by either the hearing examiner or director shall be published in the official paper. If the exception is approved, it shall be placed on file with the community development department.

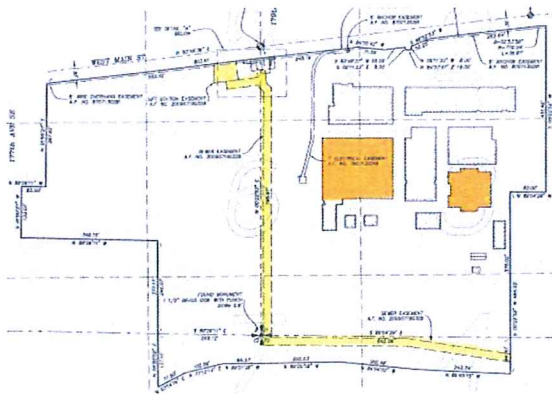
1. Public Agency or Utility. If the application if this chapter would prohibit a development proposal by a public agency or public utility that is essential to its ability to provide service, the agency or utility may apply for an exception pursuant to this section. After holding a public hearing pursuant to MMC 21.50.030, Hearing examiner review and recommendation, the hearing examiner may approve the exception if the hearing examiner finds that:

- a. There is no other feasible alternative to the proposed development with less impact on the critical areas, based on the demonstration by the applicant of the following factors:
  - i. The applicant has considered all possible construction techniques based on available technology that are feasible for the proposed project and eliminated any that would result in unreasonable risk of impact to the critical area; and
  - ii. The applicant has considered all available alignments within the range of potential alignments that meet the project purpose and for which operating rights are available.
- b. The proposal minimizes and mitigates unavoidable impacts to critical areas and/or critical areas buffers. Any decision by the hearing examiner is final unless appealed.

**RESPONSE #2 TO WATERSHED COMPANY REVIEW  
PARK PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL MODERNIZATION  
MARCH 3, 2016**

**Could the building area be reduced by building “up” or adding more stories to the building?**

The overall square footage of the school (or number of classrooms) could not be reduced without impacting the student capacity of the facility, which is needed for existing and future enrollment growth. The area of the building that could be extended to three stories is the classroom wing portion, which is on the north side of the site. The two existing buildings (gym and F Building) will remain on the south side of the new building area. The location of the existing buildings is what denotes the southern edge of structures on the site and drives the Critical Area encroachment. Additionally, existing easements on the site limit placement of new buildings. Adding a third story to the classroom wing would not move buildings further away from the wetland buffer, nor create additional useable space outside of the buffer for site and field development.



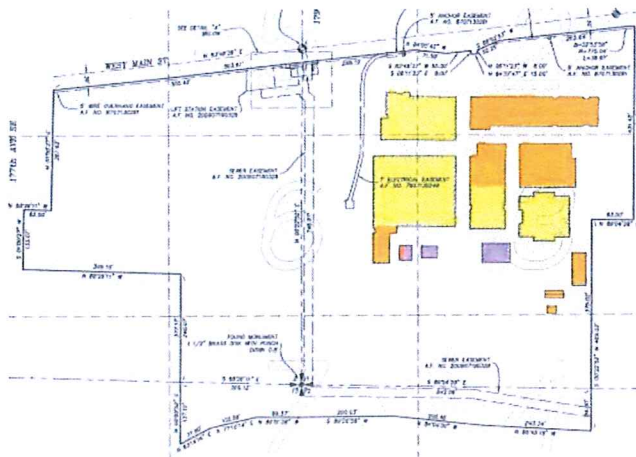
**Existing Easement & Buildings to Remain**

Orange: The gym (except for the southern extension) and Building F will remain.

Yellow: The sewer easement running through the center of the site and along the southern edge limits the site's building area.

The educational program is not well supported with a three story building as it would require more extensive supervision, additional building security measures, different mechanical systems, and additional fire separations. All of these elements would add to the project and ongoing operational costs – well outside of what was promised and funded by the 2015 bond measure.

The school must be occupied during construction, which means that the site design had to take into account accommodating students during the two years of phased construction. Portions of the existing buildings will be demolished during the first phase, while the remaining buildings will be used for classrooms. It is not possible to demolish all of the buildings at once, which would have allowed for more flexibility in site design.



#### Phase 1 Construction

Orange: Buildings to be demolished in first phase

Yellow: Occupied school and classroom areas during first phase

Purple: Portables to be relocated west of gym during first phase, then removed from site

Many design scenarios and schemes were explored, yet did not meet the District's expectations for program and site development. Some of the designs that were considered (and rejected) are illustrated below:

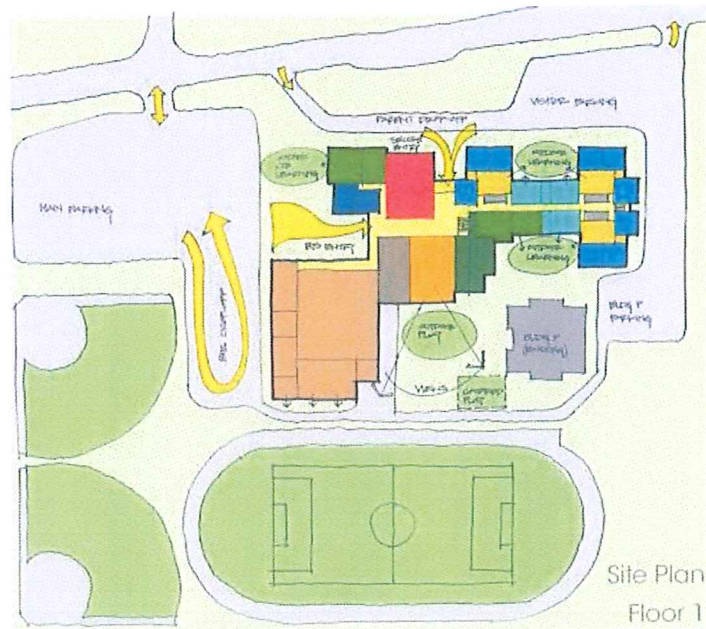


#### Scheme 1





Scheme 2



Scheme 3

### **Has the area of pavement been minimized?**

The District has minimized paved areas to the extent allowed by code. The area of pavement is driven by code requirements for emergency access, site circulation, and parking. In fact, the District has requested a variance from the City to allow less parking than is required by code. Without the variance, the site would have to provide 802 parking spaces, which would be significantly more paved area. With the parking variance, the site will provide 118 spaces, plus an additional 46 spaces (during non-school hours) by using circulation areas for parking. Not included in this count are 33 parking spaces designated for Building F.

All of the paved areas are necessary for operation of the school: bus access, student drop-off, handicap access, parking, safe walkways, emergency/fire access and truck access for deliveries.

The facility will maximize use of all paved areas for parking – for example, the bus and parent drop-off areas will be used for parking during non-school hours and events.

### **Are the pavilion space and paved access south of the school buildings necessary?**

*Assumption: the reference to “pavilion space” is referring to the covered play area.*

Both the covered play area and the southern paved area are necessary. The covered play area is used by students before school, during lunch, and after school. The area is also used as part of the physical education program, as it is an outdoor area that is protected from weather.

Paved access south of the school is required both for fire/safety and operational issues. The Monroe Fire District is requiring full fire coverage all the way around the building, including the south side. Additionally, trucks and other vehicles must be able to access the south side of the building for deliveries and maintenance. Trucks using this area include food deliveries, supplies, maintenance, garbage and recycling. The site design allows for large trucks to be able to back up to the service area.

Student and pedestrian safety must be considered when designing service and truck areas. The current design allows for trucks to access the service area without crossing paths with students.

The paved area south of the building also provides parking for Building F, which is a code requirement. At the end of construction, Building F will be removed from educational use and will not be part of Park Place Middle School. The final use of this building has yet to be determined, but whatever the use, parking must be provided for this building that is not part of the school's required parking count.

### **Could the fields be smaller or reconfigured to allow more space for vegetated buffer between the developed area and the wetland?**

The fields have been designed to meet middle school physical education and athletic standards, they are not larger competition-sized fields like those at the high school. Reduction of the football/soccer field or

track would not make sense, as it would render it unusable for middle school and community sports programs. The fields, as currently sized, are essential to the educational program of the school.

With the location of the existing buildings (gym and F Building) it is not possible to move the football/soccer field any more to the north away from the wetland buffer. The existing sewer easement also limits placement of the fields.